ATTORNEY-GENERAL

INFORMATION IS KEY IN DISASTER AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

31 July 2013

The Government could increase its ability to assist during a disaster or emergency situation with proposed changes to the Information Act that allow for greater sharing of vital information between public sector organisations.

An issues paper titled Sharing of Personal Information in the Event of a Disaster Inside or Out of the Northern Territory has been released for public comment and highlights the need to share crucial information to assist in the process of providing aid, relief, and rescue and recovery assistance.

Attorney-General John Elferink said public sector organisations hold large amounts of personal information about members of the public, including health and family records which can be extremely valuable to assist when disasters unexpectedly arise.

"The issues paper proposes the release of information to secure organisations and agencies in the event that a disaster or emergency occurs in the Northern Territory, interstate or overseas," Mr Elferink said.

"Emergency situations often call for a coordinated approach across government agencies to act quickly and efficiently and we must ensure the legislation in place allows this to occur.

"Territorians need to be assured that in the event of an emergency or disaster, the relevant agencies and organisations are receiving information that can assist the response and recovery efforts.

"Disasters and emergencies can strike at any time and it is imperative we are well prepared and are best placed to manage the situation.

"Major incidents, such as the 2002 Bali Bombings, highlight the need for records to be made available so that agencies are able to work together to provide a fast and appropriate response.

"I encourage stakeholders and members of the public to comment on the issues paper to share their views and opinions about the proposals raised," Mr Elferink said.

The issues paper can be viewed online at http://www.nt.gov.au/justice/policycoord/lawmake/reports.shtml. Comments are due by 30 September 2013.

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